

EXMOOR AREA PANEL

THURSDAY, 16TH MARCH, 2023

The Chair advised that the Somerset Communications Team would be filming some of the meeting, to be used for promotional purposes. (No objections were raised).

Present: Sally Baker & Patricia Bainbridge (Brompton Ralph PC), Sarah Buchanan (Brompton Regis) Howard Albery (Brushford), Eric Norman & Roger Foxwell (Cutcombe), Sally Moran (Clatworthy) Margaret Rawle (Dulverton TC) Mike Ellicott & Jeremy Hickman (Exford), JD Sapsford (Exton), Mary Abel and Samuel Payne (Huish Champflower) Stephen Colson & Susanne McCanlis (Porlock) Katy Attwater & Lesley Webb (Timberscombe) Fran A' Brook & David Williams (Upton), John Bray & Colin Wilkins (Winsford) Tim Lloyd (Withypool & Hawkridge) Andrew Bray (Wootton Courtenay)

Tony Brooks from Crowcombe Parish Council, Roger Webber (local resident).

Also Present:

SWT/SCC Cllr Steven Pugsley, SCC Cllr Frances Nicholson, SWT Nick Thwaites, SCC Tessa Munt

Officers:

Alyn Jones (SCC) Sam Murrell (SWT) Kevin Bridgwater (SCC) Kali Martin (SCC), Nicola Dawson (Somerset Prepared), Frances Gully (SCC), Ally Laing, Rose & Jade (SCC Communications Team).

PCSO Michelle Haimes. PCSO Linda Brooks and PC James Calloway (Avon and Somerset Police)

Ruth McArthur (Exmoor National Park)

82 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Duncan McCanlis (Porlock) Christine Dubery (Dulverton), Andrew Turner (SCC), Phil Collings (DSFRS). Ann Sparling & Dave Powell (Luxborough), Tony Howard (Withypool & Hawkridge), Cllr Val Keitch (SCC) Matthew Headley (Brompton Regis), Mark Shields & Diane Weston (CCS Village Agents), Andy Milne (SWT).

83 Introduction to SCC Executive Cllr Val Keitch - Lead Member for Local Government Reorganisation & Prosperity

84 Minutes of the Exmoor Area Panel Meeting held on 12 January 2023

(Minutes of the meeting of the Exmoor Area Panel meeting held on 12 January 2023 were circulated with the agenda)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Exmoor Area Panel meeting held on 12 January 2023 were confirmed as a correct record.

There were no matters arising.

85 **Presentation on Local Community Networks**

Frances Gully presented an update on the current position regarding the roll-out of the LCN programme. Please [click here](#) to view the slide pack.

Frances invited the panel to help with developing the terms of reference and trialling the model of governance. It is envisaged that the first constitutional LCN meetings will take place in June, once the staff resource is in place. It was agreed by the committee that Sam Murrell, who facilitated the Exmoor Panel meetings, and was acting in the broker role for the Highways Pilot needed to be retained. Sam was invaluable in acting as a conduit between the Council and the parishes and had a lot of local knowledge.

It would also make sense to link the Exmoor LCN with the Minehead, Dunster and Watchet area as there was shared interest due to GP surgeries, Exmoor National Park and school catchment areas.

- **Terms of Reference (TOR) (5.1)**

The Chair invited comments from the Panel about who should be part of the core membership. Most of the statutory agencies regularly attended, and invitations would be sent to the NHS and Education, once it was clear who would be the best local representative.

It was agreed that under the VCFSE sector, an invitation would be extended to Exmoor Young Voices, the Village Agents and possibly the Food Banks.

Representatives from Business or Trade Groups would include the Hill Farming Network, Exmoor Tourist Association and Rural Enterprise Exmoor which fell under the umbrella of Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA). The ENPA would also be a core member.

It was recognised that each LCN would adopt its own TOR, and this would evolve as time went on. The Constitution was a living document which would be tailored to suit.

- **Wider Participation (TOR) 5.3**

It was agreed that wider participation would be encouraged from additional attendees as and when required. At present there are a few annual guest speakers including Christine Boland (Magna Hsg) and Avon & Somerset Police Crime Commissioner Mark Shelford, who have regular slots on the agenda. These standing items would be retained but there will be opportunities for others once the aims and objectives of the Exmoor LCN have been determined.

Sub-groups such as the Highways Pilot would be set up to work on specific themes and topics and would pull in the relevant resource and data as required.

The Chair advised that the Exmoor LCN was keen to launch and would be seizing the first available date in the Municipal Calendar: Thursday June 8. It was recognised however that the Panel would need to meet before this, to manage the business of the Highways pilot. Thus, Exmoor Pilot meetings have been booked in the diary, and further Highways sub-group meetings need to be organised.

86 Somerset Prepared - Nicola Dawson, Civil Contingencies Manager

Nicola Dawson presented a series of slides outlining how communities can increase local resilience and prepare for civil emergencies such as flooding. This also included what funding can be made available to assist in preparations.

Please [click here](#) to view the slide pack.

The main areas of community risk in Somerset are livestock disease, flooding and pandemic. It was recognised that communities on Exmoor are very resilient by virtue of adapting to their local environment, but community plans need to be updated and refreshed.

Nicola highlighted that Somerset Prepared were particularly keen to hear from the owners/trustees of community buildings who could offer up a short-term safe refuge space in the event of a civil emergency. Ideally this would have access to kitchen and toilet facilities and would act as a central hub for the emergency services and co-ordination of operations.

It was also important that there were local Emergency Community Contacts so that there was effective liaison between the parishes and the Council. This had been highlighted during the COVID-19 emergency when SCC needed information on vulnerable residents in rural areas.

Nicola also highlighted how communities can apply for the [Somerset Prepared Small Grants Scheme](#).

Nicola was thanked for her presentation. She agreed to return next year as a standing item on the agenda.

87 Avon and Somerset Police Report

A letter has been sent to publicans, shoots and hunts advising that there will be increased vigilance around drink driving. There have been some poaching incidents, and this was being monitored. (It was very important that local communities reported such crime so that resources can be allocated where necessary). There had been some sporadic thefts around vehicles and the neighbourhood team were visiting local beauty spots and advising car owners on preventative measures.

Leaflets on Operation Landlike were left to take away. The monthly newsletter has been circulated since the meeting took place. (Attached).

It was discussed that as the panel moves towards becoming the LCN, there could be an increase in work around safeguarding and more collaboration with the police on protecting vulnerable children and families. Michelle Haines mentioned the work currently ongoing with Dementia Alliance to promote wristbands in the community.

The police were thanked for their attendance and then left the meeting.

88 SCC Highways Matters

Kali Martin was introduced to the panel as the new West Somerset Area Highways Manager. He lived locally on Exmoor and was acutely aware of the current issues around winter maintenance and communications with the parishes. He was going to

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be monitoring the work of the Highways Steward and following up on concerns around diversions and routine maintenance.

He advised that the work on the A39 at Selworthy had been completed, but there would be a requirement to return and repair some gullies that had been damaged by heavy machinery whilst the resurfacing works were being carried out. This had been picked up in the post-work inspection. It necessitated a return visit, and the work would be undertaken under temporary traffic lights in the week commencing 20 March.

Exford Landslip

It was asked when the public meeting was going to be held to advise of the works that would be taking place in May and communicate to residents and businesses. Kevin Bridgwater, informed the Panel that the work was still being assessed by the Bridges and Structures Team and that no date for the commencement of the works had yet been finalised. Site surveys and analytics were still be carried out into the best way to stabilise the carriageway. A contract would then be drawn up and put out to tender. All of this would take time to implement.

Parish representatives from Exford and Cutcombe expressed bitter disappointment at the delay and stated that not clearing the grips was going to cause further problems to the structure of the road. The Chair intervened and said the correct place to have the debate would be at the next Highways Sub-group meeting, when all the facts could be presented, and a more informed discussion could take place.

It was agreed that the communications around the scheme needed to be transparent so that all parties knew what was happening, allowing businesses and residents to plan accordingly.

Salt bins/bags

14 Grit bins have been distributed to parishes as a result of devolved funding requests. Bins are 220L capacity and fastened via a hasp and staple. (6 black bins were allocated to Withypool and Hawkridge, whilst the remainder were yellow). The bins were delivered by the Highway Steward, providing a good opportunity for the highway wardens to meet him.

There was some reluctance on the part of parishes to put out empty salt bins, and it was requested that SCC Highways liaise with them about this, to prevent the new containers from going missing. Kevin Bridgwater advised that it was the contractor's responsibility to do the filling, and it wasn't always known when this would happen.

The parishes need to notify Highways advising where the new bins are located so that they can update their maps. They need to be sited 450mm away from the public highway and clearly visible. A what3words location point would be the most useful point of reference.

Parishes needed to let SCC know when their salt stocks needed replenishing, so that they can meet the demands of the winter weather. An email should be sent to countyroads-westsom@somerset.gov.uk.

Highway Steward Update

Please [click here](#) to access the Exmoor LCN – Highway Steward Job Request.

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It is important that work requests are reported as separate items so that jobs do not get missed on the worksheet. Please use one request per parish area, and remember he is a single operative so will be unable to undertake works of a technical nature or that require traffic management. The team are also looking into how the work request form can be enhanced by allowing maps and photographs to be uploaded into the work planner. Tim Williams has now caught up with outstanding jobs from December and is working through his routine and cyclical works.

Urgent works such as blocked drains should be reported via the defects portal to ensure a swift response. General repairs such as potholes, road damage and other problems outside of your parish boundary should continue to be reported via the SCC online portal. www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem-on-the-road/.

The Highway Steward will be active around the district in his truck which is a Milestone vehicle.

Exmoor Pilot – Satisfaction Surveys

Can parishes please complete the following satisfaction surveys, so that the team can determine what is working and what needs to be done? Thank you to those who have already done this.

- [Highway Steward Satisfaction survey](#)
- [Parish Online usage survey](#) -

89 Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA)

An update was provided by Ruth McArthur.

- A new Exmoor Business Directory has been launched, which is free to join. 200 businesses have already registered. The aim is to promote local businesses across the ENPA area.
- A consultation on proposed changes to the planning system and committee structure is due to take place soon.
- It is more cost effective to repair damaged finger signposts than to completely re-cast and or replace them. It was requested that any damaged finger posts are retained as much as possible, so that they can be re-purposed.
- There are historic monuments and interesting building grants available through the ENPA.

Cllr Roger Foxwell asked if there was going to be a reduction in grazing on common land on Exmoor, in light of recent press coverage which stated that Natural England had requested this of Dartmoor National Park. ENPA has confirmed following discussion with Natural England colleagues, there is not a need to reduce stocking numbers on Exmoor moorlands. This is largely due to the grazing systems being different to Dartmoor which has far more extensive commons often with little access to in-by-land.

90 Parish Lengthsman Scheme and Update

Dulverton Town Council has now issued all invoices to participating parishes.

91 **Items to be brought forward by Parishes**

There were no items at the present time.

Roger Webber (local resident) stated that he was going to stand down from the panel/LCN as he was no longer an elected representative. He hoped that the good work that the panel had managed to progress would continue, even though it seemed to be happening at a very slow pace. He would maintain an interest, especially around the persistent use of diversion signs in Cutcombe when no works were taking place. (A source of much frustration). The Chair thanked him for his considerable contribution to the Exmoor panel over many years and reminded him that the meetings were open to the public. He could still attend and participate as a resident in the future.

92 **Dates for Exmoor LCN Meetings going forward - To be confirmed**

Exmoor LCN/Panel Date	Proposed Highways Sub-Group Date
Tuesday 25 April	TBC
Thursday 8 June	TBC
Thursday 7 September	TBC

Exmoor LCN / Panel meetings will be

held at the Moorland Hall, Cutcombe.

Duration of the meeting: 7.05 - 9.08 pm

Chairman at the meeting on
Thursday, 16 March 2023